

Claims 1-4, 7, 8, 9, 13, 23 and 24

Independent Claims 1 and 23 each recite:

wherein a pair of first and second stitching yarns is positioned between each adjacent pair of top cross machine direction yarns

(emphasis added). This relatively large number of stitching yarns provides, *inter alia*, reliable binding of the top and bottom layers of the fabric.

By contrast, in the fabric disclosed in Vöhringer, the stitching yarns **8'**, **9'** are only positioned between certain spaced apart, periodic pairs of adjacent machine direction yarns. Accordingly, these limitations of Claims 1 and 23 are not found in Vöhringer, and the rejection of Claims 1, 2, 4, 23 and 24 under Section 102 over Vöhringer should therefore be withdrawn. Furthermore, the Office Action has proposed no rejection of Claims 1, 2, 4, 23 and 24 under Section 103 over Vöhringer, and Applicant submits that no grounds for such a rejection exist in view of the art of record.

Claims 1 and 23 also recite the arrangement of the additional stitching yarns as:

such that said first and second stitching yarns cross each other as they pass below a transitional top machine direction yarn.

(emphasis added). As a result, the first and second stitching yarns are completely integrated into the top, or papermaking, surface of the fabric, and therefore do not adversely impact the papermaking qualities of the fabric.

By contrast, the additional cross machine direction (CMD) yarns **20'**, **22'** of Wilson '042 and the CMD yarns **15**, **17**, for example, of Wilson '929 cross each other as they pass between, not below, a transitional machine direction yarn. Accordingly, these limitations of Claims 1 and 23 are not found in Wilson '042 or Wilson '929 and the rejection of Claims 1- 4, 7, 8, 9, 13, 23 and 24 under Section 102 over Wilson '042 or Wilson '929 should therefore be withdrawn.

Claim 7 also stands rejected under Section 103 over Vöhringer in view of Wilson '929. However, Applicant submits that the proposed modification of Vöhringer in view of Wilson '929 in no way satisfies the above-noted deficiencies of

both Vöhringer and Wilson '929, and the rejection of Claim 7 under Section 103 should therefore be withdrawn as well.

The Office Action has proposed no further rejection of Claims 1- 4, 7, 8, 9, 13, 23 and 24 under Section 103 over Wilson '042 or Wilson '929. Applicant submits that no grounds for such a rejection exist in view of the art of record.

**Claims 14-17, 20, 21, 26 and 27**

Independent Claims 14 and 26 similarly recite that the first and second stitching yarns cross each other as they pass below a transitional top machine direction yarn, and are therefore distinguishable from Wilson '042 and Wilson '929 for the reasons set forth above. Claims 14 and 26 also recite:

wherein between 25 and 50 percent of adjacent pairs of first and second stitching yarns are interwoven as reversed picks.

(emphasis added). As discussed in Applicant's specification, this "reversed picks" configuration is particularly effective in masking the presence of stitching yarns in the top surface of the fabric.

The claimed reversed picks configuration is not disclosed by Vöhringer, Wilson '042 or Wilson '929. Accordingly, these limitations of Claims 14 and 26 are not found in Vöhringer, Wilson '042 or Wilson '929, and the rejections of Claims 14-17, 20, 21, 26 and 27 under Section 102 over Vöhringer, Wilson '042 or Wilson '929 should therefore be withdrawn. Furthermore, the Office Action has proposed no rejection of Claims 14-17, 20, 21, 26 and 27 under Section 103 over Vöhringer, Wilson '042 or Wilson '929, and Applicant submits that no grounds for such a rejection exist in view of the art of record.

**Claim 13**

Claim 13 is allowable for the reasons set forth above with regard to Claims 1-4, 7, 8, 9, 13, 23 and 24. Moreover, Claim 13 recites a fabric wherein between 25 and 50 percent of adjacent pairs of first and second stitching yarns are interwoven as reversed picks. Accordingly, Claim 13 is also allowable for the reasons set forth above with regard to Claims 14-17, 20, 21, 26 and 27.

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Filed: 1 August 1997  
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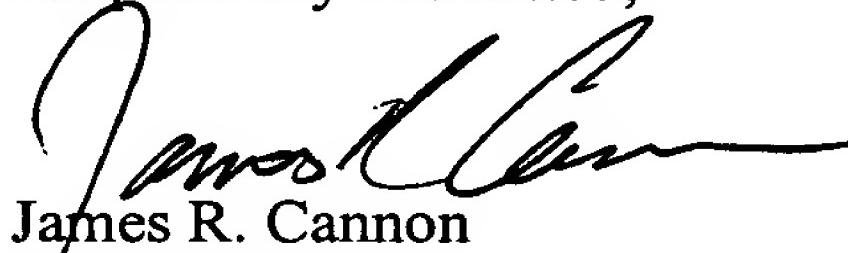
**Claims 5, 6, 10-12, 18, 19, 22 and 25**

The Office Action indicates that Claims 5, 6, 10-12, 18, 19, 22 and 25 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicant submits that, in view of the allowability of the respective base claims, such amendments are not needed and the objection is overcome.

**Conclusion**

The points and concerns raised by the Examiner in the outstanding Official Action having been addressed in full, it is submitted that this application is in condition for allowance, which action is respectfully requested. Should the Examiner have any small matters outstanding for resolution, he is encouraged to telephone the undersigned at 919-854-1400 for expeditious handling.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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**CERTIFICATE OF MAILING**

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to Assistant Commissioner for Patents, Washington, DC 20231, on October 21, 1998.

  
Sarah F. Duffy  
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